

THE
HISTORY
DE
POMPADOUR.

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HISTORY
OF THE
MARCHIONESS
DE
POMPADOUR.

PART the FIRST.



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Madam de POMPADOUR.

HE Public having long ranked amongst its objects of curiosity, the history of a personage who has acted, and continues to act, so distinguished a part in the world, as madam de Pompadour; the following account of her is offered towards its satisfaction. No tedious introduction is here prefixed to prepossess the reader in its favor. To the execution itself it is left to decide on the degree of credit that it may deserve.

This celebrated lady's father, or reputed father's name was Poisson, butcher to the Invalids. Sometime after he was married, he fell under the cognizance of the law, and was hanged in effigy for a rape ; himself having, by flying the kingdom, escaped personal execution. There he stayed till he obtained his pardon at the intercession of Madam de Pompadour, or at least on her account.

Her mother who was one of the most beautifull women in France, did not, in the absence of her husband, deliver herself up to a vain barren affliction. That she might not want for consolation, she pitched upon two declared gallants at once, publicly known to be her keepers ; Monsieur Paris de Montmartel, and Monsieur le



Normant de Tournean, both in great employments in the revenue. A woman capable of having thus two men at her service at the same time, is not supposed too scrupulous to have more, though less openly. It is certain however that Madam Poisson passed for being extreamly free of her favors. Whilst her husband then was absent, she was brought to bed of a daughter, who is now the famous Madam de Pompadour. Chronology could scarce be tortured into affording the least reason to imagine that this rare production was the work of her absent husband. Messieurs Paris and le Normant being the most apparent of her lovers, were competitors for the honor of a paternity, that, perhaps on a strict examination, would have come out to belong to neither.

Madam Poisson however had, it seems, her reasons for preferring Monsieur le Normant to the other. She persuaded him, that he was actually the father of the child. As a proof that he was persuaded, he took, to the utmost, a father's care of it. Being bred under his eye, and particular direction, there was no accomplishment procurable omitted for her education. Dancing, music, singing, painting, were all bestowed upon her, and she had talents for them all, joined to an air that graced them all. Nothing could be more amiable than her person, or than the sprightliness of her temper. Had not Monsieur le Normant been prepossessed with the opinion of her being his own natural daughter, her beauty, and even the pains he had taken to form her, and the success of those pains, could not have failed to endear her to

him. His fondness for her grew to such a height, that in due season, he began to think of providing for marrying her, in a manner that should show he considered her, in not a less light than that of a legitimate daughter.

Amongst a number of conquests her growing beauty had made, was that of the young Monsieur le Normant d'Estiolles, nephew to the person who had thus acted the father's part by her. His access to the house, his familiarity on the foot of so near a relation, had procured him repeatedly the sight of the young Poisson. Nor could he see her with impunity. The charms of her person in the first spring of her bloom, the graces of her air, and the accomplishments of her education, had entirely subdued and captivated

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him. As his views were honorable, the difficulty was not to break the matter to his uncle, the fair's supposed father, but to his own; whom he could not expect to find very reconcilable to a match, against which there were so many objections.

These indeed the uncle, on the overture of his nephew's passion and intentions, from his fondness for the young Poisson, soon got over, as to himself. The point was now to bring over the young gentleman's father. This was not an easy matter. At length however Monsieur le Normant prevailed, through the efficacy of his offers, the main of which was to lay down half his fortune, for the present, and to settle the other half at his death, on his son. The fear of these advantages, going with the supposed daughter, into an-

other family, joined to the passionate solicitation of his son, induced his father to hearken, and at last to close with this proposal. The young pair were married, and Mademoiselle Poisson was now Madam d'Estiolles.

It does not however appear that her heart had been greatly consulted in this match. Monsieur le Normant d'Estiolles had not the most engaging person, being rather diminutive, ill-favored, and upon the whole a very mean ordinary figure. Yet if any thing could atone for the want of personal merit to touch the heart of a lady, he must have been master of her's. The lover did not sink with him into the husband. As he was very easy in his fortune, there were no expences in dress or diversions, spared that might prove his passion for her. Though she had charms

enough to make a lover and especially a husband-lover with his figure, jealous; he indulged her in all the liberty she could wish. He assembled and entertained at his house the best and most agreeable company that Paris afforded, and of which herself was the life, from her gayety, and not the least ornament, from her beauty.

Amongst the numbers that resorted to her house, many were drawn there by designs upon her; and as they had the double-facility of declaring themselves, from the manners of the french, far from being unfavorable to gallantry, and from her sprightliness, which was far from discouraging, they did not long refuse themselves the ease of acquainting her with their sentiments.

Amongst these was the abbot of Bernis, now actually minister of state and in fair prospect of a Cardinal's hat. The first foundations of his fortune, were then undoubtedly laid by his passion for this lady, who, tho' she did not think fit to gratify it in the way he desired, preserved a gratefull remembrance of it when she came into power. It was by her intercession he was first named ambassador to Venice, and by rapid degrees, her patronage procured him his present advancement. Yet he was originally no more than of an obscure family, in Pont St. l'Esprit, a little town of Languedoc, on the borders of the Venaissin. Nor was himself known at first but by some little verses, most of them in praise of his fair Madam d'Estiollles; and in which, though they did not want for a certain easiness of composition, there was cer-

tainly too little merit to have got him a place in the Royal Academy, if his patroness had not made a point of it. But if his genius for poetry was not held a very superior one, his talents for politics were still less so. Nor has the public hitherto entirely approved of Madam de Pompadour's promoting this old Celadon of hers; possibly from its thinking it much easier to make him a minister than a statesman. But be that as it may; he and a number of others sighed for this lady, who, by the indulgence of her husband, was delivered up, as it were to their courtship; and sighed in vain. For, though the world has far from spared her character, since her success, or rather fall with the french King, it is generally agreed that before that, she had gone no farther than mere coquetry, to the prejudice of the faith due to her hus-

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band. It is true, she gave no lovers that offered, absolute repulses, but she granted no particular favors to any of them. The most pressing she put off, with saying, "that if she ever wronged her husband, it should not be with any one but the King." All of them laughed at this, and perhaps at that time, had reason to imagine, that the jest would never be realized into an earnest that does so much honor to the Italian proverb: "If you will be Pope, take it strongly into your head that you shall be Pope."

Though this declaration of hers had nothing more than an air of gaiety, the dispositions she made were not the less serious. She had designed the conquest of the King, and was determined to omit nothing conducive to the achievement of it. One of the

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King's favorite diversions was known to be that of hunting. She pretended to her husband, a fondness for it herself; to which he was far from having the least objection. Having then procured a riding-habit, the most exquisitely imagined, as in taste she ever excelled, for working the designed effect, and striking the blow she meditated, she managed so as to attend the King constantly in his hunting-parties, not as one of his court indeed, but as simply a spectatress of the sport.

Thus she contrived to throw herself in his way, as often as possible. But all would not do. She had the mortification to find herself at the expence in vain of so many attractions, and advances. The King however could not pass unobserved so beautifully conspicuous a figure, but then it was without

any emotions of love or desire that he had taken notice of her, and had even asked who she was.

But she did not escape the piercing eyes of a rival, and a rival so much in possession of the king's heart, that it was at that time shut up against the impressions of any other fair. This was madam de Mailly, daughter of the Marquess de Nesle. She had taken notice of Madam d'Estiollé's affectation of attending the chace, of her waylaying, as it were, the King, and playing off her charms in his eyes; she had been alarmed with the enquiry he had made concerning her; and, to cut short any views she might have of succeeding by a persistence in her designs, she, with all the authority of a favorite, sent her word, that the best for her,

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was never to appear at any hunting-party of the King's again. Madam d'Effiollles, who was in no condition of life to measure with Madam de Mailly, thought herself obliged to obey the intimation. Thus for that time, her pretensions were if not at an end, at least suspended.

As this suspense makes an interval in her history, it may not be improperly filled up with a summary account of the french King's gallantries ; an account that is even so necessary to the clear comprehension of the whole, that it can hardly pass for a digression.

Lewis the XVth. had, at a very tender age, being only turned of fifteen, been married to Mary the daughter of Stanislaus Lec-

finſki, ſometime King of Poland, now Duke of Lorrain ; ſhe was ſeven years older than himſelf. With this Princeſs the King lived for a number of years, in a moſt exemplary ſtrain of conjugal affection, even though the match had been made, as thoſe of his rank generally are, without conſulting in the leaſt his inclination or ſo much as the likelihood of its ever being ſo. The perſon of the Queen had never been extreamly engaging. The diſparity of years though indeed not a great one, could not ſtill be but of ſome conſideration. A numerous iſſue attesteſt however the union that reigned between them, and ſeemed to enſure its duration. The King bred up by Cardinal Fleuri to ſtriſt notions of conjugal fidelity did honor to his preceptor in the ſcrupulous obſervance of them. Habit too joined to confirm what

duty had begun. The Queen had besides a thousand good qualities that might have compensated for any personal defects. It is probable that for a long time the King had not so much as a rambling thought to her wrong. He had even pretty smartly rebuffed some of those courtiers, who mean enough to seek that advantage from the vices of a King, which they have not to hope from his virtues, had attempted to seduce him. To one of them who was with that view, extolling to him the charms of a lady of the court. “ what ! said he sharply, do you think her “ handsomer than the Queen ?” The courtier had not a word to reply, he was so choaked with this answer.

Such constancy was not made to stand eternally proof against the power of example

in so corrupt a court. Ten or twelve years however were passed before the King gave any signs of weariness, or inclination to rove. It is said the Queen's person had with her growing years, and frequent childbearing, contracted certain infirmities rather fit to disgust than to invite enjoyment. The disproportion of age also began more and more to show itself. But with the regard the King had for her, as the common parent of his children, as well as for her excellent temper, and unaffected piety, it may be believed that he did not easily, nor without many conflicts with himself, depart from his system of justice to her bed. But when he had once burst the bars that held him, and yielded to the calls of his constitution, which was naturally an amorous one; he, like a torrent that had been before re-

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strained by its banks, overflowed all the fields of licentiousness.

In the midst however of the most unbounded alienation of his person from the Queen, he never but preserved inviolable the tenderest regard and esteem for her. It is true, that from a spirit of moderation, she rarely intermeddles so much as to ask any favor ; but whatever she asks is granted without hesitation, and with the best grace imaginable. Her conduct then, has rendered her not only the darling of the people, but even of the court itself, where virtue has not always that justice done to it, which the superiority of hers compells from it.

When the King first began to give a loose to his inclinations, and to talk of his will and

pleasure to have them gratified, in the tone of a master that would be obeyed, the Cardinal Fleuri was soon apprized of it. This old, supple, refined courtier, knew the world, and especially the temper of his pupil too well, to think he would brook restraint in a point, where few men are capable of suffering any. He would indeed have wished it otherwise, but thought it most prudent to connive at it, and even under-hand to direct where the storm of the royal appetite should fall, which having at that time no determinate object, but the sex in general, he judged the King's business was with the readiest. Upon this plan, he said, "*He ! bien donc, qu'on fasse venir la Mailly,*" well then, since it must be so, let la Mailly be sent "for." La Mailly was accordingly sent for, and la Mailly came. Few ladies at

that court would have refused to pick up the Royal Handkerchief, or rather not have scrambled for it.

The King however was so pleased with her, that he kept to her for some time. Nor did she but deserve it. No mistress ever made less advantage of a royal gallant. She was generous to excess. No favors she obtained from him, were for herself. Charitable, good-natured, affable, and obliging, she repaired in some measure, by a number of virtues, the blemish of her honor.

So far from pillaging him, she received the little presents he made her with reluctance. Amongst others, the King one day, sent her a pair of gold candlesticks, at which she laughed, and only said, his Majesty ought

not to have forgot the snuffers: and this she said, more because she thought it pleasant, than from any cravingness. When he left her, she threw herself into a deep devotion, died in a convent, and died insolvent. So little harvest had she made of her favor.

But if the King quitted her, it was only for a sister of hers. There were five of them, all daughters to the Marquess de Nesle, la Lauraguais, Mailly, Vintimiglia, la Tournelle, and Flavacourt, all of whom became his mistresses, in their turns (and some of them at one time) except Madam Flavacourt, the handsomest of them, to whom the King had a great inclination; but her husband was so rude and unpolished, that he preserved her only by telling her, that she might if she

pleased, play him false, but that no King on earth should hinder him from shooting her through the head, if she did. This single exception however did not hinder the old gentleman their father the Marquess de Nesle from saying, “ that since his Majesty had
“ lain with his whole family, there remain-
“ ed only himself for him to consummate
“ the honor upon.”

Madam de Vintimiglia, who was the next, had a son by him, that was covered by her being married.

To her succeeded Madam de Tournelle, who died, as it was at least popularly believed, by poison. The King had, at the instances of his confessor, during his sickness at Metz, renounced any further commerce

with her. But this extorted resolution lasted no longer than till his health returned. The lady received assurances of a renewal, but did not survive the reception of them above two or three days ; being taken off as it was supposed, by some who imagined they had reason to dread her resentment, on her return to favor.

As to Madam de Lauraguais, another of the sisters, she had had only a transient part in his affections, and in the course of her employ of confidante to the intrigues of her sisters withhim.

All these passions were now over, either by death or satiety. An interval succeeded, in which the King no longer attached to any particular mistress, resolved to try the

charms of variety ; to which he even sacrificed delicacy. He had women brought him, from amongst all orders of the people, not excluding the lowest, or what they call *grizettes*. By this last we understand here such nymphs as are scarce above the form of a stuff gown, checked apron, and colored handkerchief. In this way he was chiefly served by Richlieu, one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, who having apartments at Versailles, made *petits soupers* at them, where he invited his master, and introduced to him such objects as he thought would please him. He was however sometimes disappointed of the acceptance of his catering. Of this there were two remarkable instances, in the two famous ladies, Madam de la Popelinere, and Madam de Portail. The King would touch neither of them. The first,

though she had great wit, he thought too affected. The other, though very handsome, appeared to him to have something too mean, too vulgar in her air, which was perhaps the more glaring for its so little affording with the richness of her dress. Had she been in a plain jacket and pettycoat, she might have struck his taste more.

But as I have given the epithet of famous to these ladies, those readers who are already acquainted with the reason why they are styled so, will, I presume, forgive a succinct digression in favor of those who are not so well informed as themselves.

Madam de la Popeliniere had been an opera-girl, and was taken off the stage by Monsieur de la Popcliniere, a rich farmer-

general of the revenue, who married her. Upon which, probably thinking, she could not make too much haste to punish him for so great a folly, she gave a loose to gallantry. Richelieu however was at the head of her list of favorites. He had hired a lodging at a tapestry-weavers, contiguous to her apartment, with which there was contrived a communication by a door in the chimney, that was concealed by the back of a high grate. This mystery was detected on the first quarrel of the lady with her maid; and the poor husband, instead of taking measures for concealing his disgrace, in the heat of his resentment, published it with all the circumstances that could make him ridiculous. At Paris the laughs are rarely on the side of the unfortunate spouses. The scheme of the chimney was thought so pleasant, that it

did honor to Madam de la Popeliniere to whom the invention was attributed. Her name became so famous that it was given to various things. It was a fashion to have caps *a-la-Popeliniere*, ribbons, hoops, fans, and so forth *à-la-Popeliniere*: and not improbable some had chimnies *à-la-Popeliniere*.

As to Madam de Portail, wife of the president de Portail, her interview with the King, though not pushed the length she could have wished, a failure she attributed to the excess of respectfull love with which she had inspired him, produced an event pleasant enough. Pretty, but silly and vain, nothing could persuade her but that she had made a compleat conquest of the king, and that nothing but an opportunity was wanting for him to give the finishing stroke to it. In this idea, at a

great and general mask-ball, she singled out one who by his air, make, and even voice ; had resemblance enough to the King, to excuse her mistaking him. She had plucked off her mask, and began to teize and provoke him. He who knew her, and who was only of the King's guards, humored the mistake ; but humored it so far that he took all the advantages of it that he could desire. Nothing was refused him. After which, she returned to the company ruffled enough in all conscience, and heartily pleased with her adventure, in the notion of its being the King, with whom she had been engaged. Her exultation did not last long. The guard who did not think himself greatly bound in gratitude for a favor not designed for him, and thought the jest, too rich a one, to be sunk upon the public, followed her into the ball-

room and only told every one he met, his good-fortune. The lady's confusion was compleat. This very story is related with more humor and more at large, under fictitious names, in the *Bijoux indiscrets*. The Lady however, sometime after, fell into a much worse scrape. She was accused of having conspired with her cook and porter to poison her husband. This charge was not indeed pushed the length of a legal trial, that might have ended fatally for her : nay, the husband was willing to stifle the affair, but Madam Pompadour, who owed her a grudge for having had designs upon the King; worked underhand so effectually, that she procured a *Lettre de cachet* to shut her up close prisoner in a convent, on the strength of the presumptions against her. But here Love took charge of her release. There was

one D'Arboulin wine-merchant to Madam Pompadour, who was making a great fortune in that quality. He had been in love with Madam de Portail, and now hoped he should have a better chance with her in her distress, than he could have flattered himself with, in her prosperity. In this view he exerted his interest with Madam Pompadour, whose resentment was by this time, in some measure appeased, and who could now have nothing to dread from a woman so thoroughly crushed ; and by her means obtained Madam de Portail's discharge, who being separated from her husband, rewarded her deliverer to his wish, and lived with him openly.

Such were two of the ladies, who had the honor of being presented, and the mortification not to be accepted by the King.

But after running the common for some time, he began to be disgusted at once, with the facility and variety of the women brought to him, which he found rather perplexed, than satisfied his taste for pleasure. In this mood, one night; as he was going to bed, he mentioned the unpleasingness of his situation to one Binet, a valet-de-chambre then in waiting. He told him he was heartily tired with new faces every day, and still without meeting with any woman worth his attachment, which he should prefer to this range through the sex ; and asked him if he knew of any one he could recommend in particular, that had merit enough to relieve him from the trouble and disgust of changing so often. Binet to whom such a confidence was highly welcome, assured the King, that he had a person in his eye for him, that he

was sure would please him, and was a cousin of his own, and that besides, she had a real passion for his Majesty's person. This piqued the King's curiosity to ask him who it was: and who should it be, but the very individual Madam d'Estiolles, and now Madam de Pompadour. Binet then proceeded to remind him that he had seen her, at his hunting-parties, and had even taken notice of her. The King recollected her perfectly, and owned that he had liked her, as much as one then engaged with another could. He added, that he should be glad to have a private interview with her, if it could be conveniently managed.

Binet now had his cue, and the next day, posted to Madam d'Estiolles, and acquainted her with what had passed. She received the

summons with rapture, and measures were immediately concerted for her lying out, without incurring the suspicion of her husband.

At the time appointed, she waited on the King, who passed the night with her, and the next morning dismissed her coolly enough. Nor did he so much as mention her name to Einet, either the next day or for many days afterwards. It is easy to guess at the vexation of the confident, and especially of the mistress who had depended so much on the power of her charms, and who had now such reason to think that the enjoyment of them had not left impressions on the King's memory, favorable enough to resummon desire. Above a month passed in this manner, when one night, the King smilingly asked

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Binet, what his cousin thought of him? His answer is easily anticipated. He told his Majesty she was full of nothing, thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing but him.

“ To say the truth, said the King, I was
 “ afraid she was too like the rest, of those
 “ I have had, either actuated by ambition,
 “ or perhaps, by yet a more sordid passion,
 “ that of interest. Otherwise, I cannot but
 “ say, I liked her very well. I had a mind
 “ too to try how she would take my neg-
 “ lect.” Binet was not so little of a courtier, interested especially as he was in the issue of this affair, not to give his Majesty all the assurances fit to revive his inclination, and to quiet his doubts. He observed particularly that interest, or at least so low an one, as that of a common hireling, could not have a great weight with her; since she was so

easy in her fortune, and that to his knowledge, she had always expressed a passion merely for his person. “ Well, said the “ King, if you really think so, I shall be glad “ to see her again.” That point was easily adjusted. The second interview took place, and had not the like consequence as the first. She now captivated him to such a point, that he was uneasy till he saw her again. And see her he did, night after night, till at length she had so far compleated her conquest, that he attached himself entirely to her.

It is generally thought, that this her success was partly owing to the instructions of her mother; a woman perfectly skilled in all the mysteries of gallantry and arts of pleasing. These instructions were seconded by a happy aptness in the daughter to profit by

them. Madam Poisson died soon after she had seen the thorough establishment of her daughter's favor ; and at which perhaps her overjoy contributed to shorten her days.

In the mean time, the frequent night-eclipses of Madam d'Estiolles, could not but alarm her husband, with whom her confidence in the greatness and power of her royal gallant, made her hardly keep any measures. He was soon apprized of his misfortune, and the author of it. As he loved his wife too ardently to share her with any one, the discovery was like a thunder-clap to him. Resolved however not to acquiesce in it, he began to speak in the tone of a person that was deeply wronged, and to exert the authority of a husband determined to be no longer so. This only hastened a measure

already concerted between the King and Madam d'Estiolles. She now boldly plucked off the mask, and sure of protection, she hoisted the flag of defiance, and repaired openly to Versailles, as to her refuge. Poor d'Estiolles thus robbed of his wife, naturally made the world resound with his complaints, and was even taking effectual measures for getting her back, when he received a *Lettre de cachet*, banishing him to Avignon.

Forced to obey, he went to his place of exile, where still distractedly fond of his wife, his violent agitations threw him into a fever, that made his life be despaired of. He recovered however, by the strength of his constitution, and the advice of his friends, representing to him the folly of throwing away his life, for the sake of a false, ungrat-

ful woman, that would only rejoice at it. He staid there about a twelf-month at Avignon, when time and reflexion operating a due effect, he grew more reconciled to his fortune. He then made interest to be recalled to Paris, which he obtained on the promise of a passive acquiescence and of a non-reclaimer of his wife, now firmly fixed in the King's affections. To this favor, if such it may be called, were added advantages considerable enough to make him easy; if fortune could compensate the loss of the person one loves. He had places and employments to the amount of more than four hundred thousand livres a year, besides gratifications for favors he should ask for others, which were sure to be granted him. Though he never sees his wife, they correspond amicably together by letters; and when Madam de

Pompadour used to go formerly much to plays and operas at Paris (which she now rarely or never does) he received, and still receives, previous intimations of her design, that he may keep out of the way ; one reason for which, was to avoid the attention of the audience to their countenances on such an occasion. Another reason might be, her own confusion at the thoughts of meeting the eyes of a man once so near to her, and whom she had so cruelly injured.

D'Estiolles since his return to Paris, finding himself thus deprived of a wife, as soon as his passion for her had cooled and subsided, thought himself at full liberty to pursue elsewhere the indulgence of an appetite, he could no longer lawfully satisfy. On this plan, which he might adopt the readier in

the hopes of stunning his painfull reflexions, he plunged into the most dissolute course of life. Amply enabled by his fortune to gratify his tastes, he kept a number of mistresses, and the opera-girls especially had the benefit of his involuntary kind of divorce. Being satisfied that all his disorders would be placed to the account of his wife, as being originally the cause of them, he might even out of revenge, take the greater pleasure in multiplying them.

In the mean time, madam d'Estiolles who had thus quitted her husband, and an only daughter she had had by him, then a girl, and was now the King's declared mistress in all the forms ; had been successfully employed in rivetting the chains of her royal lover. Abundantly provided with art, she

had thoroughly studied his temper, his humors, his inclination, and so perfectly conformed to them, that she fixed him to her, by creating in him, a despair of finding another woman, with whom he could be so easy and happy,

From the vivacity of her penetration she, soon felt out the King's weak side. She soon discovered, that of all the faculties of pleasing, of which she was mistress; none would have greater power to hold him fast, than that of amusing him.

Kings have more hours of dulness than other men, from their having early exhausted, the whole chapter of pleasures, through the facility of their coming at them, and the courtly assiduity of numbers, constantly em-

ployed, in springing them for them. By this means before they are half-way through life, few diversions can have the merit of novelty to them. It must be a great genius for invention, that can procure them the satisfaction of it; and a greater one yet that can give to pleasures palled by repetition of enjoyment, the grace of novelty, from the art of constantly varying and reproducing them under a new form, and with higher seasoning. In both these points of novelty and variety, Madam d'Estiolles was sovereignly the King's woman. Constitutionally impatient above all of the yawns of dulness pining for amusement, he could hardly have found an other so capable as herself, of filling those dismal instants of vacuity, with which he was so miserably embarrassed. To all the graces of her person, and

her acquisitions from education, was added, that art so necessary at courts, the art of trifling. The veriest bagatelles had the power of pleasing by her knack of treating them. No-body could tell a story or relate the little daily adventures of the Court and Town with more humor or a better grace. She sung, she plaid upon most instruments in a masterly manner. She danced with all the lightness and air of a nymph, of which she had all the delicacy and freedom of shape. But that in which she excelled was, the exact adapting the display of these accomplishments to the call of the moment. Nor did she but take particular care to have donewith them, the instant before the one in which her exquisite discernment taught her they would cease to be agreeable. Thus by preventing weariness, she was sure not to lose

the merit of all the entertainment she had precedently afforded. So many talents for pleasing, joined to the elegance of her taste, amply qualified her for filling the post of a Petronius Arbiter at that Court. No pleasures were thought such that had not the stamp of her contrivance, or the sanction of her approbation. All of them were required to be *a-la-Pompadour*. At those *petits-soupers* of which the King is so fond, where laying aside all the stiffness of state, and unlacing royalty, he enjoys himself with a few select, rather at that time companions and friends than subjects, no one more than she contributed to animate the company, and to keep up the spirit of joy in it. She was the vital principle of those little parties. The King, in short, had so many reasons to feel that she was necessary to the pleasure,

of his life, that he had no temptation to an inconstancy he was aware would create a not easily reparable gap in it.

Deeply impressed with a grateful and tender sense of all that she was to him, he thought no marks of it too much for her. The Bourbons have been often known to be expensive through ostentation, and sometimes lavish through love, but generosity was never their attribute. The present reigning one, is no exception to this general character of his family. Naturally parsimonious he had not very royally rewarded the favors of former mistresses. It was reserved for the superior influence of Madam d'Estiollles to unlock the sluices of his liberality, and they were poured out in a full flood upon her and hers.

He presently gave her a marquifate, with the title of the Marchionefs of Pompadour.

Her father, who fo probably had only that name, from his being married to her mother, had obtained his pardon, and now an ample provision for life.

Poiffon, who was her brother, at leaft by the safe fide, and remarkable for nothing but for being her brother, was created Marquifs de Vandiere, on which the courtiers, playing on the word, called him *Le Marquis d' Avant-hier*, which may be neareft, though not literally, tranflated by *the Marquifs of yefterday*. The fenfe is hereby pretty well retained, though with the lofs of the pun, a lofs that will hardly be efteemed a great

one. Yet trifling as the jest undoubtedly was, it was probably to elude the sting of it, that he soon after took the title of the Marquess de Marigny, in virtue of a Marquisate of that name he had by the King's bounty been enabled to purchase. He had before been made super-intendant of the King's Buildings, Gardens, Arts, Academies and Manufactures, a post of great importance and emoluments. All which favors could bring no great dignity with them, considering the nature of the interest through which they came. The good-man Poisson, the father, could not help saying, "As to my daughter, she has wit, she is pretty, she may deserve the Kings notice: but as for his doing so much for such a worthless blockhead as my son Charles, in good faith! it is unpardonable."

But even the King himself, with all his fondness for the sister could not refrain his railery upon this upstart brother of her's. As some of his court were talking before him of the next promotion to the blue ribbon, and naming this young *Poisson* as one that was expected would be included in it, he said, *Non ! c'est un trop petit Poisson pour le mettre au bleu.* "No ! he is too small
 "a fish for blue sauce." Those who do not understand French enough to know that *Poisson* is a *fish*. and that *mettre au bleu*, is one of the ways of dressing the larger sort in France, will lose the jest entirely. which however can hardly but be the King's own. So bad a one as it is, had it been any one's else, it could never have been thought worth repeating.

The King was now entered with her into the giving strain, which might be one of the reasons to him, as it is to many others, for continuing to give, especially to low persons, with whom, without that continuance, all the merit of what was before given is presently lost. One gift then became only the pledge and wiredraw of another. But considering the disproportion of his profusions to the object on which it fell, it could not but have rather the air of the weakness of a passion than of the royal virtue of generosity. It was a river poured down a sink.

His privy-purse was entirely at her command, of which she profited without measure or mercy. For besides the expensiveness of the system of life into which she

had engaged him, she drew from him what sums she pleased, independent of the unbounded traffic she made of her favor and influence, by her procurement of employs, posts, jobs, and other beneficial emanations from the royal authority. It has been averred, and not without some color of probability, that by this means, she has accumulated a prodigious fortune, part of which is said to be lodged in most of the banks of Europe. Part of it is more apparent as being employed in buildings.

She purchased a palace at Paris, called the Hotel d'Evreux, near the Thuilleries, which not being good enough for her, she pulled down and built almost anew from the ground. This did not cause a little heart-burning to the Parisians, at seeing

the palace of a Prince converted to the use of a King's mistress, and that mistress taken, as it were, from the lees of the People. When the placard or frontal inscribed with the name of the old Hôtel was taken down to make room for the new one of Madam de Pompadour, there were a thousand pastquils, virulent couplets, and sarcasms stuck on the walls of the building, expressing the sense of the people. Nor was their rage a little exasperated by the circumstance of a large parcell of ground being, on this occasion, taken in towards enlarging the gardens, out of the *cours*; a place so called from its serving for the nobility and gentry's taking the air in coaches, much as was once the fashion here at the *ring* in Hyde-park. This they looked on as robbing the public, and though it was autho-

rized by the royal grant, it did not hinder the mob from gathering and insulting the workmen, at their work of raising the walls that were to enclose this encroachment. Nor could they have gone on with it, if a detachment of the guards had not been posted to protect them.

She had also acquired a superb Hotel at Versailles, not for herself, for she had apartments in the palace itself, but for her numerous retinue.

The King besides gave her the royal palace of Crecy for her life, which occasioned great murmuring amongst all orders of people, at the indignity of such a mis-application of a part of the Domain.

He also, on a fancy that suddenly took Madam de Pompadour, built her a magnificent seat or pleasure-house, called *Belle-vue*, from the delightfulness of the prospect, which had, it seems, excited her desire to have a house there, just on the road to Versailles, near Seve and Meudon. Here too, in order to form the gardens, several proprietors of lands were despotically compelled to part with them, much against their will, and at the price fixed on them. An oppression that could not but aggravate the resentment of a public, already not overpleased with the sums squandered upon her.

But difficult as it must seem for a mistress to be thus constantly receiving and squeezing her keeper, without any sign of a mercenary or interested disposition escaping her,

that difficulty, the superior art and genius of la Pompadour conquered. Naturally of a supple, insinuating temper, joined to all the talents that go to the making a good comedian, a fine genius, in short, for a court ; any character she chose to act, cost her too little effort, for that effort to betray its being no more than acted. Her art was too refined to have its effects ruined, by letting itself be seen : all without having seemed to ask any thing, she obtained every thing. Never was the game of disinterestedness better plaid, without prejudice, be it understood, to interest. But if her love for the King was not a feigned one, or at least much exaggerated by her, she was but the more justly accusable of a meanness unknown to that passion where it is real ; that of laying the person she loved under

unmercifull contributions, besides taking the advantage of his weakness to draw things from him, that could not but be hurtfull to his reputation. Neither had she, in excuse of so gross an inconsistency, to plead ignorance. Of the nature of her own motives she could not be insensible; and the loud voice of the public which could not but reach her, must have informed her of all the mischief she was doing him, if she could herself be supposed not to know it. But she had not it seems, more of delicacy than just the surface, necessary to save the appearances of her not wanting it at bottom; no love that could interfere with the gaining those her ends of the King, which she never might perhaps have gained, if its being more sincere, had left her less liberty of mind for the exertion of art. Sheer sen-

timent and love for his person were the disguise used by her; a disguise which stale as it is, still rarely fails, from the self-love of the person on whom it is employed meeting the deception above half way. Kings above all men, are liable to this imposition. One would think they were born to be the bubbles of every kind of flattery, that of others and their own. In point especially of love, there is nothing of which they are so jealous as of their rank sharing their successes with their personal merit, and in nothing are they so apt to be egregiously deceived.

The king however proceeded more and more intangling himself with Madam de Pampadour, not only, through habit, but from the favors he accumulated on her, and

which, with the usual effect of favors, on the conferring side, endeared her the more to him. Versailles, as every one knows, is one of the most superb palaces in Europe, but proportionably the least lodgeable, as if its magnificence could not have existed, but at the expence of its conveniency. Nothing can be less commodiously contrived than the distribution of the apartments, of which there is also a great scarcity. The Queen and daughters of France are not themselves lodged extreamly at large; but even the principal officers of the court are wretchedly accommodated in that respect, some of them are forced to take up with *entresoles* hardly superior to garrets. But the apartments of Madam de Pompadour are scarce inferior to those of the King himself, being on the ground-floor directly under

his ; his bed-chamber communicating immediately with hers by a private back-stair-case, so that they can come to one another without passing through any outer-room.

In the mean time such high marks of distinction, joined to so unbounded a profusion, could not but create to the person on whom they were conferred, a number of enemies. Envy alone, at a court, would have operated that effect; and perhaps more strongly yet, if the merit of the subject had contributed to exalt its virulence. But on this occasion, there were many motives for discontent that might fairly be owned. If the scandal was not much at a court, familiarized to such examples ; the ignobleness of the object, and the excess of favors poured forth upon so obscure a family, could

not but alarm and indispose many, but none so much as the most zealous well-wishers to the King. Even that insipid herd of courtiers. who scarce dare call their opinion their own, enslaved as it is to a master from whom they receive orders what it shall be, had that pride of theirs, which is so consistent with the utmost meanness, hurt by their being obliged to creep to a creature of fancy, late so much their inferior. Not daring however to speak out, they revenged themselves of the restraint, by redoubling their secret detestation and contempt of her, and of all her noble family at her tail. The dissatisfaction, in short, was general, and Madam de Pompadour, even in the infancy of her power, and before her ascendant was so well established, as it since has been, had like to have been the vic-

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tim of the rising storm. As the occasion was extreamly singular, and made a great noise, at the time, it cannot be improper to particularize it here.

There was one Madam Sauvé, wife to a clerk in the office of Monsieur d'Argenson, secretary at war: she was a subaltern to Madam de Tallard, governess to the Duke of Burgundy. the Dauphin's eldest son, then an infant.

On a particular day, that this young Prince was shown to the people, who came in great concourse to see him; this Madam Sauvé was in waiting. The child was placed in a cradle on the inside of a balustrade, to defend it from the inconveniency or danger of the croud, pressing

too close upon it. As soon as the room was cleared, Sauvé approaching the cradle, as she took the Prince out, gave a scream, occasioned by a packet sealed up, which she said she found there. It was directed to the King, and being delivered to Madam de Tallard, the Governess, she immediately carried it to him. On being opened it was found to contain some grains of corn, allusive to the scarcity that then reigned; and a letter full of bitter expostulations with the King on his mis-government, and on his scandalous attachment to La Pompadour; not without threats even of a second Ravaillac, if he did not reform his conduct and take more care of his People.

The king was greatly shocked at this, not so much from the tenor of the letter itself, as at the manner of its conveyance.

La Pompadour knew herself detested by Monsieur d'Argenson amongst others. He had been so careless of concealing his sentiments of her, or rather so open in the declaration of them, that the wonder was, how he could hold his place, as it were in defiance of her power with the king. Her suspicion then instantly landed upon him, which she did not fail of communicating to the king. Nor were there wanting circumstances to countenance it. D'Argenson's enmity to her was manifest. Madam Sauvé was not only the wife of one of his clerks, but was suspected of being his mistress. In short, she so far inclined the king

to believe that he was at the bottom of this mystery, that he threw out hints of the deepest resentment against d'Argenson.

But the very broaching this suspicion against a minister in such high credit had like to have been fatal to her own favor. The Queen, the ministers, almost the whole Court, in short took side against her. It was but one cry with them, that the whole affair was an artifice of her own, executed by some obscure agent of hers, and levelled at a man who had had no fault if it could be called one, but that of thinking no better of her than she deserved. The King even with all his partiality for her, was staggered with the unanimity and vehemence of the clamor against her.

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Madam Sauvé, who had found or pretended to find the packet had been narrowly examined. Her answers had only increased the perplexity. Interrogated how it was possible for such a thing to be conveyed into a cradle defended by a balustrade, on the inside of which herself stood near it, without her marking and seeing the person; she replied, that she had felt her hand squeezed at the instant she supposed the packet was slipped in, but that in so great a concourse, she had looked on it only as the action of some person willing to approach the cradle as near as possible, or perhaps thrust involuntarily towards her, and catching at any thing to save himself: and that even had she been aware of any thing extraordinary, the motion was so

quick, and the croud so fluctuating, that she could neither distinguish persons nor faces.

To this it was opposed, that so strange a circumstance as that of having her hand squeezed, could not but alarm her enough to cry out on the instant, which it seems she did not, even if she had not the presence of mind to distinguish the person, and to call the guards, at hand, to secure him.

This however might have passed, if her subsequent conduct had not strengthened the growing suspicion of her being concerned in the fact. The very night of the day on which this accident happened, as she was going to bed, she told her maid, that

she was sure that the person who had conveyed the packet into the cradle, would never be easy, till he had her life, from the apprehension he might be under that some time or other, she should know him again, and have him seized : That she should spare him the trouble of making away with her, and herself all further terrors about it, by taking poison. The maid said every thing she thought proper to dissuade her from so wild and causeless a project, and La Sauvé pretended to have renounced it. But as soon as the maid had left her, she swallowed some poison, but not in a dose sufficient to dispatch herself, which does not indeed appear to have been her intention. The poison however she had taken, working some effect, she groaned and cried out so

that the maid returned, who finding what she had done, alarmed all within call. Upon this, proper help was immediately sent for, and counter-poison enough given to her, to defeat the effect of more than she had really taken. Any danger of her life then was soon out of the question. But there appeared in all this something so over-acted, so much of grimace, that the suspicions thickened against her. She was accordingly taken into custody and sent to the Bastile, from which she never came out. Nor is it known what examination she underwent in that prison of the state-inquisition, what tortures were used, what discoveries were made, or whether she was privately executed or not. What is certain is, that she has not been heard of since. Her husband Sauvé had fled on the

first notice of her being apprehended, but returned some time after, on being amply justified. It may be presumed however, that D'Argenson was intirely innocent, since the cloud that had hung over him was pretently dispelled, and himself, at least to all appearance, restored to the king's former confidence.

But if La Pompadour was any ways guilty, as it would be perhaps too great a refinement of conjecture whetted by prejudice, to suppose she was, the smothering the process against La Sauvé, and her own continuance in favor, could only be accounted for by that prodigious ascendant she had obtained over the king, who might not therefore be willing to expose or to

punish her, and had not the power to renounce her. Such a weakness however, is so incredible, especially as it must be joined to so much injustice, that one would of the two, rather incline to think La Pompadour innocent, on this occasion, of the scheme imputed to her.

But as if this storm had only shaken her to fix her the firmer, no sooner was it blown over, than the king appeared more infatuated with her than ever. The court was soon given to understand the extent of her influence. She alone could make fair or foul weather in that region. No offence was more severely resented, than any mark of disrespect to the woman whom the king delighted to honor.

She had also more than a common cause of triumph and self-congratulation for having put the conquest of the king on a solid footing, by the discovery she had made of the only effectual way there was for her to preserve it.

It is a great pity that for the ease and happiness of society, that secret of hers, provided it should not be, like her's, abused, was not more common in practice than it is. Whatever danger however the men might be exposed to from it, the women could not but be gainers by it, and fail of its effect it really could. This secret then, was no other, than on hitting the king's particular humor, by studiously conforming to it, to make him find a greater pleasure in her company than with any

one, or any where else. Neither are great beauty nor great wit so requisite to secure this point as the wisdom of sacrificing to complaisance that selfish spirit, from which, and that most commonly in trifles, little humors, and silly passions, one's own satisfaction is preferred to that of others. A sacrifice ofteneft sure to be repaid with more lasting and much greater advantages than that of what is vulgarly called, and more vulgarly practised, having one's own way.

Of the soundness of this theory, La Pompadour, was, by the having adhered to it in practice, enabled to boast a victorious experieuce. She had not lived many years with the king, in quality of his mistress, in the most extensive sense of that word, before she was disqualified from

discharging what is commonly thought the most essential function of it. A female disorder had grown upon her to such a height, that the king was forced to abstain from any intimate approaches to her, by the advice of his physicians who represented them, as not even exempt from danger to his health. Difficult as it might be to the king to wean himself from her embraces, no constancy of desire could however well be proof against this double infirrigation of her personal infirmity, and of the fear of its consequences to himself. In this critical situation it was, that La Pompadour had to triumph on her not having solely trusted to any thing so perishable as the attractions of her person. She was now to reap the benefit of her having taken

care to secure her hold, by such a multiplicity of chains, that even so great an one snapping, could not restore him to his freedom. The whole court, and not improbably herself, were surprized to see she could keep possession of the king, in circumstances so fit to cool and disgust him. Many motives however, might concur to fix him; his predominant passion for amusement, by none so well gratified as by her; the old circle, with princes, of favor begetting gifts, those gifts still greater favor, that favor again further gifts, and so on to the end of the chapter; habit; the spirit of contradiction, finding a kind of joy in disappointing the conclusions of numbers; the singularity of the thing; and perhaps, above all, that false pride of the human heart, so

often breeding a persistence in errors, from the renunciation implying a confession of them, and by which it is so silly as to be grievously hurt. All these weaknesses, for such they all are, combined together might without too much occasion for wonder, account for his not having strength enough to break loose. No symptoms of remission betrayed such a design. On the contrary, he now appeared more enslaved than ever.

Monseigneur de Maurepas, who had, among others, presumed on this accident to her person, operating its most probable effect, was one of the first victims of this opinion. He was not only a minister of state, but one of the most highly favored ones ; having been as it were, bred up with the king,

and taken into the administration before he was scarce of age. Upon a certain festival that la Pompadour had sent the king the compliment of a nose-gay of white roses; this circumstance was, amongst the news of the day, told to Maurepas at his levee. On which he laughed and said, “ he had never “ thought otherwise than that she would, “ some time or other, make his majesty a “ present of *white flowers*.” Coarse even to indecency, as this allusion was, it was eagerly caught up, by some that were present, and soon re-ecchoed through the court. The thought was versified, and the lines were fathered upon Maurepas. No outrage could have been more stinging, nor more personal to la Pompadour, who incensed at it beyond measure, had influence

enough with the king, to makē him enter into her resentment.

Maurepas lost at once, both place and favor, most probably for ever, no part of the king's character being more established, than that of his never returning to those he has once left. Chauvelin, a very capable minister, and purely in complaisance to cardinal Fleuri, by him dismissed, though he had a great esteem for him, had been before one instance of that inflexibility of his. Not even Chauvelin's plainly proving afterwards, how greatly in the right he had been, could ever procure a revocation of his disgrace.

But as it was necessary to give some color to so violent a step as that of discarding

Maurepas, and as the true motive of it could not well bear being told, a pretext was set up of some mal-versation and negligence of his in the marine department. But the public, admitting there was some truth in the charge, conceived only the more indignation at so good a reason's not having produced that dismissal which was reserved for a compliment to la Pompadour's private pique and animosity. So true it is too, that, in courts, men are not so often the victims of their vices as of their virtues, and a hatred for la Pompadour passed for one.

Neither was this the only, by many, examples of the danger of offending her. Monsieur de Resselier, a knight of Malta,

and officer in the guards, had wrote four virulent lines, in which taking her for his text, he had so little spared the king's weakness for her, that his punishment for being the author of them, might have plausibly enough been as much attributed to his having attacked his majesty, as his majesty's mistress; had not the king himself openly made a merit to her, of his disclaiming on this occasion any revenge but hers. The sense of these lines was, “ that
“ a king who could debase himself so much
“ as to pick out the very meanest object
“ on the earth, for the placing his affection on, could be capable of nothing
“ but meannesses. The suspicion falling violently upon Resselier of his being the author of them, guards were sent, at a time

that he was from home, to his apartment, when upon ransacking it, they found the original foul draught, blotted with here and there erazements, and alterations in his own hand, that proved the lines to be of his composing. Had there been only a fair copy found, though of his own writing, it would have been no proof, as he might have pleaded its being only a copy, or taken down upon memory. As it was, he was condemned to the iron-cage at Mount St. Michael, for life : a sentence much severer than that of death. For this cage, is a place in which the prisoner can neither stand upright, nor lie at his length, so that he has no posture left for him but that of sitting. In this irksome condition he was detained seven years, and then had no mi-

tigation, but what was obtained for him by the intercession of the order of Malta, through which he was transferred to the dismal prison of Pierre-Encise, but where he could however enjoy the liberty of his limbs. Here he had not been long before la Pompadour satisfied, as she well might be with what he had suffered, piqued herself upon generosity forsooth ! and procured his release, with leave to return to Malta. His preferment in the army was lost. It is said, that before he quitted the kingdom, he waited upon la Pompadour, to return her thanks ; a step that would almost rob him of the pity raised by all that he had endured. But what is there that may not be believed of the servility of the subjects of that nation ?

But though la Pompadour was thus become, in a very material sense, an invalid, and disqualified for the king's chamber-service; she was not, it seems, capable of doing herself the justice of not being jealous of the king. Any shew or appearance of liking in him to another woman, gave her the greatest uneasiness, though she took care to conceal it from him. When madam de Brionne came to court for the first time, and as it was imagined, not quite without design of pleasing the king, he could not keep his eyes off her, and said, with some emotion at supper before la Pompadour, that he did not think he had ever seen a more beautiful woman. This alarmed her, and to prevent the consequences, in time, she had a hint underhand con-

conveyed to the Prince Charles of Lorraine, (not the present one) of the danger there was to be apprehended to the virtue of his nephew Monsieur de Brionnes's, wife. The prince who was one of the old rigorists in point of honor, did not give himself a moment's rest, till he had managed, so as to make his nephew hurry madam de Brionne from court immediately.

In the mean time La Pompadour not content with accumulating treasures, with all the rapaciousness natural to the condition out of which she had been taken, the wife of a farmer of the revenue, began every day more and more to betray the meanness of her original, by exactly that sort of pride and vanity which so strongly cha-

racterize it. There were no airs of influence she did not give herself. With too much sense not to be conscious of every thing that was against her, she had not however enough to see that the character of King's mistress, repairing nothing, only made every thing that was against her more notorious: she did not see that all the pains she should take to screw herself up to a height above contempt would only make her the more inviting mark for it. These reflexions were either above her making, or were subordinate to the native littleness of her passions.

It would be endless here to produce all the instances of her arrogance, that so often provoked the secret scorn and derision of

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the court, but of none more than those who humored it, by their most court-like compliance. A few of the most glaring ones may suffice.

In proof of the high idea she was grown to entertain of herself, and of her dignity, one point of state she took upon her, was the suffering no stool or chair besides her own elbow-one in her dressing-room, where she received company setting at her toilette. By special grace, indeed, whenever his Majesty did her the honor of a visit, there was another produced for him. Or if Princes of the Blood, Cardinals, or some of those very high personags indeed, on whom she could not well hope to pass such treatment, as that of receiving them setting

without offering them a chair, she vouchsafed to admit them, herself standing till they were gone. The Marquess de Souvré however who was not, it seems, of that excepted rank, waiting upon her at her toilette, and finding no chair for his accommodation, very familiarly clapped himself down on one of the elbows of hers, and continued the conversation, lolling by the side of her ; she inwardly fuming and broiling all the while. This unparallelled outrage as she construed it, she instantly complained of to the king, who took the first opportunity, of calling the Marquess to an account for it. “ Faith ! said he, “ I was devilishly fatigued, and seeing “ no where else to sit down, I even made “ the best shift I could,” the cavalier easy

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air of his excuse, made the King laugh, and his happening to be a kind of privileged favorite, hindered any further notice being taken. Otherwise he might have learned, to his cost, what it was to sit upon the elbow of La Pompadour's chair.

She affected the princely air of having a gentleman-usher. In this employ she entertained one Monsieur Dinville, a nobleman of one of the best and most ancient families in Guyenne. This puzzled the world to decide which was greatest, her insolence or his meanness.

She had in her service one Collin, a kind of steward or clerk of the kitchen, whom

she did not think of distinction enough to wait upon her in that capacity, unless his person was decorated with some Order. Such an idea would have entered into the head of few real born Princesses. This point she soon carried, by her interest with the king, to have him made one of the comptrollers of the royal and military order of St. Lewis. This institution was peculiarly designed for those officers who should serve with distinction, or acquire a certain title to it from seniority in the army or navy. Collin never known but for a menial servant, could not consequently have the least qualification. But this office of comptroller, not indeed making him a knight of St. Lewis, has the same effect of giving him the privilege of wearing the

cross and insignia of that order. So that to all appearance, and with La Pompadour Appearance ever stood at least equivalent to Reality; she may have to stand behind her chair, with a napkin tucked under his arm, a knight of St. Lewis with his cross dangling. If she had taken a spite to the order and meant to explode it by such a disgrace, it was no bad way of effectuating it, just as the french government, to put down the fashion of callicoes ordered, upon a time, the hangman to wear them, in his office at the gallows.

Her arrogance still increasing with her favor, nothing would serve her but having the honors of the Louvre, which principally consist in the privilege of the ta-

bouret, or stool to sit on in the presence of the Queen, and in being presented to her to be embraced, which is the ceremony of investiture. This was not very decent for La Pompadour to ask, considering the light in which she must stand to the Queen ; who however out of her unbounded complaisance to the King, made little or no opposition. Even the *Etiquette* or forms of the Court very rarely indeed allowing this distinction but to dutchesses, gave way to the paramount favor of the candidate, whose pretention was more-over somewhat authorized by the precedent of Madam de Montespan, mistress to Lewis the fourteenth who had obtained the like. It had also been urged, in mitigation of the objection to character, that she no longer

kept up any criminal commerce with the King, and that his conversation with her being now reduced to the purely platonic terms of friendship, any reason of that sort for her exclusion ceased in course. The involuntariness indeed of all this innocence, no one was so uncourtly as to mention, as it would not have greatly fortified the argument in her favor

This triumph however did not come pure and unmixed to her. In the midst of it, she met with one of those mortifications, to which vanity is so lyable, and which subscribe, at a Court especially, infinite rejoycing, when they do happen.

In the course of the ceremony, she was presented to the Dauphin, to receive his salute. The Dauphin, who naturally enough detested her, as he tendered one side of his face to her to kiss, lolled out his tongue, and winked with his eye, on the other. It was not possible for La Pompadour to see this, but she was presently after told of it. Bursting with rage, she flew to the king, painted this treatment of her in all the lively colors her emotion could furnish, and concluded with her being determined to leave the court rather than stay at it exposed to such intolerable insults. The king incensed at his son's procedure, which he construed into an irreverence to himself, adopted her resentment, and the next day as the Dauphin was disposing himself to pay

the devoir of a morning-vifit to him, he received orders, to retire to his palace at Meudon. Upon this, the queen, the minifters, and numbers at the court interpoſing; the king would however hearken to no interceſſion for a reconciliation, but on condition that the dauphin ſhould perſonally go to La Pompadour, and in full circle diſown his procedure. He ſubmitted, and in a numerous præſence declared to her, “ that the report “ that had been made to her was a falſe “ one, and that he had not in the leaſt “ behaved in the manner that had been “ told her.” She received this declaration like a moſt gracious princeſs, and answered him, with equal truth, that ſhe had not believed a word of the matter. Thus ended this not uncomic ſcene. But the dauphin

was blamed by many, as having too much debased himself in such an humiliation. They did not perhaps enough consider his double duty of son and subject, so that what fault there was in this step, could hardly at least, be so great in him who obeyed, as in him who commadned.

La Pompadour having thus obtained the honors of the Louvre, this success did not so much satisfy as encourage her to make a further trial of her power. She, not long after took it into her head, to be *Dame du Palais*, or Lady of the Palace to the queen; a place this, never given, but to ladies of the highest distinction, for birth, rank, and character. The queen was passive, as her acquiescence had been,

in the affair of the Louvre, must however have been void of all sensibility, if she could have stomached her misfortune being as it were brought home to her, by this, obtrusion of a person so offensive to her, into her household. Yet consonant to the whole tenor of her complaisance, for every thing she knew was the king's desire, she made no objection, but such an one, as she imagined, would be absolved to him, by its affecting his honor and his conscience equally with her own.

Waving then any other reasons, that however just, might be only the more likely to displease for their being so, she represented mildly but firmly, “ that
 “ it would be too crying an indecen-
 “ cy for her to admit, a person into

“ that station who could not even ap-
“ proach the altar to take the sacra-
“ ment, whilst in a scandalous state of
“ separation from her husband. That the
“ circumstance of the innocence of her
“ present intimacy with the king, of
“ which she was satisfied, did not in the
“ least cure the wound in la Pompadour’s
“ reputation, whilst, though actually a
“ married woman, she lived as it were at
“ large, and in defiance of the duty of
“ a wife, to be no where, but at her
“ husband’s home. That his majesty
“ might certainly order as he thought fit,
“ but that she hoped, for his own sake,
“ that he would not put such a slur
“ upon his royal house, as to bring in-
“ to it, in a station of such nice honor,
“ a person so much under the censure of

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“ the church, as to be lyable to a refu-
“ fal from it of the common benefit of
“ the Eaſter-communion.

The king on the one hand, tender of either urging the queen too far, or of doing any thing that might too much ſhock eſtabliſhed rules ; on the other, having nothing more at heart, than to ſatisfy la Pompadour, was terribly perplexed, and at a loſs for ſome expedient to ſalve or ſurmout this objection of the queen's, of which he felt all the force.

The queen adhered to it as the only one ſhe could have pitched upon, in which the captiouſneſs of malice itſelf

could not discover the least shadow of the cavil of jealousy or offence to him.

La Pompadour, herself, with all her wit, was at first utterly posed by this seemingly invincible dilemma. For if she continued in her state of divorce, which having been originally a criminal one, was still irregular; she durst not present herself to the communion, for two reasons; she would have been most probably repulsed in a manner not the most agreeable; and even had she succeeded, it would not have passed but for a gross and unpardonable sacrilege, suggested by ambition and executed by Irreligion.

That way then the door was barred against her hopes. If she returned to the little man her husband, they were equally annihilated. The mere lady-wife of d'Estiolles, could with no very good grace be a *Dame du Palais*.

Then the confusion to which she was exposed by this disappointment of a pretension she was known by the whole court to have made, and the pleasure she bespoke that disappointment giving her enemies; did not a little encrease her vexation. The king shared in it, the courtiers enjoyed it.

Yet insuperable as this obstacle appeared, 'La Pompadour at length found means

to vanquish it. She wrote a letter to her husband d'Estiolles, in the truly Magdalen-style, of which this was the substance; " she assured him, that she had
 " very sincerely repented of the injury
 " done him, and of the disorder of her
 " life. That all the most essential part
 " of her wrong was ceased, but that she
 " wished all appearances of it should
 " cease too. That being determined to
 " atone for her past, by her future conduct; she entreated him to receive her
 " again, and that she would thenceforward take care to edify the world, by
 " the union in which she would live with
 " him, as much as she had scandalized it
 " by her separation."

Whilst she was writing this letter, and before it could be sent, the prince de Soubize went to d'Estiolles, and told him, " that in about two hours time, he would " receive a letter from la Pompadour, to " the effect above recited. That he was " undoubtedly the master of proceeding " as he pleased, since all authority was " out of the question ; as it was requisite that his answer should be perfectly " a free one : but that as a friend, he " would advise him to reject the offer " contained in the letter. That in his " acceptance of it, he would certainly " not make his court to the king, and " that therefore it became him to weigh " well what he did."

To give the greater force to this counsel, he at the same time brought him an order for a very considerable augmentation of his emoluments in the revenue.

D'Estiolles in whom time and reflexion had long brought his passion to reason, and consequently to great indifference, if not contempt for his wife ; d'Estiolles, who could not but know what was so publicly known, the condition of her person, that rendered her as useless to him in one sense as to the king, and who was besides engaged with a number of mistresses, would now have been very loath to take her back, even if he had not been so powerfully entreated and so well

paid for not doing it. Not impossibly too, on finding the matter thus left to his option, he might not be sorry to seize so fair an opportunity of being pleasantly enough revenged on his majesty, for his having taken away his wife from him, by leaving him so bad a bargain on his hands, since he seemed so fond of it, and which d'Estiolles had now so good a right to call his refusal.

He made no more objection to what was desired of him, than what would at once make the greater merit of his compliance, and not provoke by too apparent a slight, a woman from whom he had so much to hope and fear. In short, the prince of Soubize had reason

to go away very well pleased with his success in this noble negotiation.

La Pompadour's letter came in the time mentioned to d'Estiollles's hand, and he answered it, conformable to the cue the prince had given him, or who rather had dictated to him what he was to say.

“ He began with congratulating her,
“ on her return to sentiments more worthy of her. He expressed the highest
“ regret of her separation from him,
“ which had made a wound in his peace
“ too wide ever to be closed again. That
“ he heartily however forgave her the
“ injury, but that he had taken an in-

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“ violable resolution, never to cohabit
“ with her again. That it was super-
“ fluous for her to expect it.

In short, though the refusal was couched in the politest terms of respect and esteem, it was as flat and peremptory an one, as she could have wished.

Armed with these victorious instruments, the copy of her own letter, and her husband's answer, she communicated them to all whom they might concern. “ She
“ was no longer in fault.—She had it is
“ true, been in a wrong way, but she
“ was now a contrite penitent, and ac-
“ quitted in course for living from her
“ husband, by his denying to receive her.”

Instead of one bishop of that church she might now have had twenty to give her the white-wash of absolution, and to administer to her her Easter-communion.

In short this farce in which religion was so palpably mocked, though it deceived no-body, had its full effect. The capital objection to her admission into the Queen's train was now removed, and the Queen herself, with her usual condescension, desisted from any further opposition; she only said with a smile, "It was not proper for me to give my reasons, and they have taken the advantage of that, not to leave me my pretexts."

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In the mean time all the well-disposed at court groaned over this fresh instance of La Pompadour's power and insolence in thus forcing herself upon the Queen. In other respects however, in justice to truth, it must be owned that she always behaved with the utmost respect and obsequiousness to her Majesty.

In fact she durst not do otherwise. She knew too well that the King's delicacy in that point was too great not to be shocked, at the least shadow of offence she should give the Queen, by any petulance, or airs of a mistress.

She knew that all her favor would scarce be sufficient to protect her against his displeasure, on any just provocation of that sort of which her Majesty should have to complain, and regulated herself accordingly. Thus, passing art for nature, she made a merit of self-interest, and of what was strictly speaking, rather the King's virtue than her own.

It has already been mentioned that before her intimacy with the King, she had a daughter by Monsieur d'Estiolles. Her name was Alexandrina, and the King was so fond of her, that the child used very naturally to call him her Papa.

He even took so tender an interest in her, that he very early turned his thoughts upon providing a match for her, and she was with reason looked upon as one of the greatest fortunes in Europe.

The first person on whom the King had designs for her, was the Duke de Fronzac son to the Duke de Richelieu. He proposed it to the father, who being too thorough-bred a courtier to give his Majesty a flat denial, waved it, by saying coolly, “ that he should consult “ the house of Lorraine about it,” from whom he was descended by the mother’s side. Such an answer was ea-

fly to be construed as a polite equivalent to a refusal.

It does not however appear but that the King had too much justice to resent it, since the Duke continued in the same favor as before, and probably not the less esteemed by him for his not having been tempted to embrace such a mis-alliance by so sordid a consideration as that of the fortune or even the favor tacked to it.

As to the girl herself, she resembled La Pompadour in more than one point. She was extremely pretty, very sprightly, and not a little assuming on the favor of her mother.

Yet, young as she was, that might be more the fault of those who flattered her, than her own. She was boarded and educated at the convent of the Assumption, where Mademoiselle Charlotte de Rohan-Soubize, daughter to the Prince Soubize and since married to the present Prince de Condé, then was, with other young ladies of the highest distinction.

Alexandrina d'Estiolles, either from ignorance or presumption, disputed on some occasion, precedence with this Princess. She was soon given to understand her error; but when her mother La Pompadour was told of it, she did not seem to give up the point, since she only

MADAM DE POMPADOUR. III

said slightly enough, “ *Elle a manqué de*
“ *politesse,*” “ She has failed in point
“ of politeness.”

This Alexandrina at the age of between thirteen and fourteen, died of the small-pox, in the same convent, about the year 1754, just as her mother was negotiating a treaty of marriage for her with one of the Princes of the house of Nassau, with what probability of succeeding is not said.

To a heart so engrossed as her's, with ambition, vanity and love of money, it would probably be doing too much honour to suspect there being much room

left in it for nature. The king's taking the tenderest part in the affliction she felt or acted for this loss, and the hurry and agitations of a court soon dissipated her grief. What she might continue to feel longest, was her being now deprived of that plausible excuse to the world and to herself, for her eagerness in accumulating immense riches, the having a child to provide for. But that it was, as it is in so many others, who plead the like extenuation of that odious vice, merely and constitutionally avarice for avarice sake, this misfortune has rather proved, since it has not hitherto appeared to have robbed that passion, in her, of a single wish, or endeavour to satisfy it.

Her brother Poisson, or marquis de Marigny's, being the present heir-apparent of that prodigious fortune she is supposed already to have amassed, would rather be a damp to her ardor for amassing, if it was not purely, in her, a self-gratification.

For nothing is more certain, than that she has a sovereign contempt for him. He crosses too much her views of vanity, in his natural unsusceptibleness of improvement, in the impossibility she sees in him of gracing the advantages she procures for him, and of doing her honor, for him be very dear to her.

Constantly mortified at seeing him the object of the raillery of the court, and indeed, of the whole world, she would, if his want of merit was not too glaring, willingly attribute the slights with which he meets, to that envy she is weak enough to think her fortune excites, and which is rather a mixture of scorn and indignation, in all who consider the first foundations of her fortune and power, and her abuse of them. As it is, she thinks it a better air to join the laugh against him, and not to lose, at least, the honor of her discernment by defending him.

But it is nevertheless imagined she will leave him all, or the greatest part of her

possessions, if but for no other reason than that loving no-body besides herself, if so odious a sentiment can be properly called loving one self, the mere circumstance of his being her brother, will be the casting feather in the scale of her equal indifference to every one besides herself.

To lessen however, the shame of this disposal of her fortune, in the prospect of any children he might have more deserving it, or to procure herself the enjoyment of her being the foundress of a family, she has made several attempts to get him married.

But this has hitherto suffered invincible difficulties from her nicety of choice

for him. It is true, that amongst the indigent or un-noticed nobility, she might perhaps easily find some with whom the considerations of opulence and favor, might overcome any repugnance to such a mis-alliance. But that would not satisfy la Pompadour's modest pretensions. It must be a family not only wealthy but decorated with the highest orders, and greatest offices in the state, into which she would vouchsafe to match her illustrious brother. Now such are not quite so easily found, as she may have imagined. Few of them are tempted to incur so thorough a ridicule as such an alliance could not fail to throw upon them.

In the mean time he continues single, but it is ardently to be wished, that he may not too long remain unmatched, lest all Europe should have to lament the extinction of the august house of Poisson.

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